

1,999 & YOU: GLOBAL ALUMNI REUNION “SHIFTING PARADIGMS”

Barcelona is preparing itself to play host to around 2,000 alumni and guests from as many as 50 different countries at the Global Alumni Meeting on October 28 and 29. The theme of the 2010 conference is: “Shifting Paradigms: Opportunities Lie in the Challenge.” The aim of the 2-day conference, combining academic and cultural activities, is to offer the perfect excuse to enjoy a long weekend in Barcelona.

The academic directors of the 49th annual reunion, IESE professors **Jaume Ribera** and **Antonio Dávila** have designed an insightful academic program, attracting a diverse range of speakers for this year’s theme. With the aim of drawing on recent shake-ups and lessons learned in the world economy over the past 18 months, **Ribera** and **Dávila** hope to bring a positive outlook to what has been a rather gloomy financial period in developed world economies.

Ribera says: “We wanted the theme to have a more positive outlook this year. The word challenge in itself implies facing something difficult from which you emerge stronger and more resilient. It is an opportunity to renew oneself and try new projects or ideas.”

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS

The academic program includes sessions by distinguished speakers and top business people such as **Esko Aho**, Executive Vice President of Corporate Relations and Responsibility for Nokia, who became Finland’s youngest minister at 36 years of age and supported his country’s entry into the EU. Also speaking will be **Bertrand Piccard**, President of Solar Impulse, the first person to circle the world non-stop in a hot air balloon. Other speakers include **Isak Andic**, CEO of Mango, **Charles Petrucci**, President of Global Travel Services for American Express, **Eric Li**, founder of Chengwei Ventures, **José Viñals**, Financial Counselor and Director of the IMF, and **Ozires Silva**, founder of EMBRAER, and **Francesco Vanni d’Archirafi**, CEO of Citi’s Global Transaction Services, among others.

“The reunion program is focused on people who,

despite the current situation, are capable of continuing to fight to improve the society we live in,” says **Dávila**. “They are capable of perceiving new ways of contemplating reality. Opportunities don’t emerge on their own, it is people who create opportunities and who know how to capitalize on them.”

The conference will aim to show that there are always opportunities to implement socially responsible policies and practices.

When discussing new paradigms in the economic landscape, **Ribera** highlights lack of trust as a key issue: “We need something to happen or an important change in order to raise public trust, in order to raise public trust and give people renewed hope in the economic situation,” he says. “And it takes more than a World Cup, something less transient.” **Dávila**, who specializes in marketing, reiterates that this Global Alumni Reunion signifies a “call to optimism” and innovation and should serve as both an educationally and socially fulfilling experience.

MAKING HISTORY

Mireia Rius, director of the Alumni Association, is determined that this should be the case: “Given that the reunion will be held in Barcelona this year and the level of keynote speakers who will be attending, I have no doubt that we will once again make history. Last year, we held the reunion outside Europe for the first time and had excellent participation levels, given last year’s economic difficulties. This year we hope for a record turnout,” she says. To further promote this goal, this year the Alumni Association recorded a video urging all alumni to “Save the date!” Both academic directors and 36 alumni from various countries including Iceland, Syria, USA



[www.iese.edu/
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and Spain participated in the making of the video which was filmed over the course of 13 hours, threatened intermittently by the looming prospect of rain.

The yearly conference is hoping to smash previous attendance records and attract up to 2,000 alumni and their guests. So far, initial reactions to the “Save the Date” video and the website launches have been promising: within 12 hours of opening for registration, over 430 alumni had already signed up. The new interactive interface allows participants to view multimedia content from past conferences, keep abreast of the latest developments and confirmed speakers, manage their reservation and, above all, register. As **Rius** explains, the new website offers alumni the freedom to manage their attendance and that of their guests with more autonomy than ever before.

GREATER INTERACTION

The new online platform, which includes social media elements and a “newsroom”, offers alumni greater interaction. “The academic program and prestigious line-up of speakers is the main focus of the conference. But we should not forget the true protagonists of the event: our alumni. This year we wanted to involve them right from the very first stages of organizing the reunion,” **Rius** says. The Alumni Association left decision making over cultural activities in the hands of the alumni. An online voting system was launched in April and distributed among the entire community of 35,000 alumni who were able to vote for their favorite cultural activity ranging from a tour of the Boqueria market and a cookery course to paint-balling.

The intense program allows alumni to enjoy academic and networking activities both before and after the academic conference on Friday 29. On Thursday 28 October, a cocktail reception will be held in the Royal Shipyards of Barcelona in Drassanes, a gothic masterpiece built at the end of the 13th century. “We have increased the number of parallel cultural activities this year,” says **Rius**. “The formula seems to work as it allows people to come with their families or reunite with their classmates. We want it to be a memorable weekend for alumni, during which they reconnect with IESE again.”

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